

## 2007 Highlights of American Indian Partnerships

The Bismarck Plant Materials Center (PMC) is active in providing seed, plants, and technical information assistance to Tribes and Tribal land users. The majority of plant species provided are culturally significant. The PMC also provides seed and plants of other species for conservation purposes, including lakeshore stabilization, erosion control, and invasive species competition. Plant and seed requests are reviewed and approved by Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota Plant Materials Committees. Most of the special plantings are community projects to demonstrate “how-to” on-site preparation, planting, maintenance, and harvest. Generally, special plantings are limited to 10 plants of each species. Cooperators are encouraged to prepare a clean-tilled, garden-like site, and to water and weed the plantings until they become established. Sweetgrass and white sage are rhizomatous and multiply rapidly on well-maintained sites. Since 2002, approximately 3,300 sweetgrass plants were distributed, primarily to individual Tribal cooperators and communities.

**Plant materials provided in 2007:**  
 630 sweetgrass plants for 25 plantings  
 180 white sage plants for 15 plantings  
 359 various other plants for 12 plantings

Technical assistance, plant materials distribution, and evaluations are ongoing with Tribal partners. Activities in recent years include:

- United Tribes Technical College (UTTC): provided plants, medicine wheel assistance, class presentations, demonstration plantings
- Sisseton-Wahpeton Tribal College: provided plants, prairie restoration assistance
- Rosebud Reservation and Sinte Gleska University: provided plants, workshops, medicine wheel assistance
- Standing Rock Reservation and Sitting Bull Tribal College: provided plants, PMC tour
- Fort Berthold Reservation: native landscaping presentation, native landscaping demonstration planting
- Mille Lacs Reservation: provided plants, plant identification assistance, lakeshore stabilization assistance
- White Earth Reservation: provided plants, field plantings, provided technical information on native seed harvest, plant identification and inventory, lakeshore stabilization assistance
- Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College and Fond du Lac Reservation: provided plants, medicine wheel assistance, plant presentation, outdoor classroom assistance
- Red Lake Reservation: tour and technical assistance



*Culturally significant native plants established on the Standing Rock Reservation*



*Planting sweetgrass on a well-prepared site at Prairie Island Reservation*



*Sweetgrass and white sage for community propagation beds at White Earth Reservation*



*Children from “Horses on the Prairie”, a UTTC summer learning program, collecting native plants for demonstration at the college*

### Helping People Help the Land

The authority for NRCS to provide technical assistance to Tribal cooperators is through various Public Laws, Executive Orders, and Memorandums. The foundation of the government-to-government relationship between the United States and Indian Tribes is the United States Constitution, treaties, and other laws involving American Indians and Alaska Natives, including case law.



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

# Bismarck Plant Materials Program

## Tribal Conservation Technical Assistance

The USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Program helps provide plant solutions for conservation needs. Many of today's environmental challenges can be addressed through the use of plants. Many native plant species have traditional uses that are culturally significant to American Indians. The Plant Materials Program can provide information, plants, and technology to assist Tribal conservation efforts.

A network of 27 Plant Materials Centers (PMCs) provides the foundation to accomplish this task. The PMC, located at Bismarck, North Dakota, serves Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Each of the three States operates through long-range plans. State plant materials committees meet annually to approve plant materials requests and develop action items for the coming year. Committee members include PMC staff, State NRCS staff, Tribal liaisons, conservation district staff, and various partners.

The Bismarck PMC, working through each State's plant materials committee, has been active in recent years in providing plants to Tribal communities and individual cooperators for evaluation, demonstration, and propagation purposes. Field plantings are formal evaluations where NRCS field offices collect data from the planting sites for a three- to five-year period. The information is compiled in a database at the Bismarck PMC and new conservation plants and the technology to use them is developed.

The plant materials specialist position is part of the State office staff at Bismarck, North Dakota. This position provides coordination for the Plant Materials Program and all seed and plant materials needs of each State. The office phone number is (701) 530-2075. The state resource conservationist of the State office staff in Bismarck, North Dakota, has overall leadership responsibilities for the three-State Plant Materials Program. The office phone number is (701) 530-2084.

Visitors are always welcome at the Bismarck Plant Materials Center. The PMC is co-located with Lincoln-Oakes Nurseries south of Bismarck across from the United Tribes Technical College at:

USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center  
3308 University Drive  
Bismarck, ND 58504  
Phone (701) 250-4330

The Plant Materials Program website provides technical information available from the PMCs (<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>). Cultural plant information and numerous other links can be found in the Plants database (<http://plants.usda.gov>).

**Requesting Plant Materials:** Information regarding availability of plant materials is sent out annually with the fall issue of *Plant Chat*, a quarterly electronic newsletter from the Bismarck PMC. Field planting requests require the completion of a signed one-page ECS-9. Completion of the form or a letter of request is also encouraged for special (demonstration) plantings. Plant materials requests should originate from the local field office or Tribal liaison position and be sent to the local plant materials chairperson. Requests for field plantings must be submitted prior to each State's annual plant materials committee meeting held every winter season.

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# Minnesota

## Plant Materials Tribal Conservation Assistance

Recent plantings for Tribal demonstration and trial propagation purposes include the culturally significant plant species of sweetgrass (*Hierochloa odorata*) and white sage (*Artemisia ludoviciana*). Technical assistance provides plant information and plant materials distribution to 11 reservations, the White Earth Tribal Conservation District, four Tribal colleges, reservation-based non-profits, and Tribal cooperators.

The Minnesota plant materials committee is comprised of members from seven different areas. The annual meeting is usually held during the second week in December. The agronomist of the NRCS State office staff in St. Paul is the primary plant materials contact person. The office phone number is (651) 602-7866.

**Highlights:** Primary activities with American Indian partners have been special plantings of sweetgrass and white sage. Field plantings include American black currant (*Ribes americanum*), fireberry hawthorn (*Crataegus chrysocarpa*), and Amur chokecherry (*Prunus maackii*). Lakeshore erosion has been stabilized with the installation of ‘Silver Sands’ sandbar willow (*Salix exigua*) and ‘Survivor’ false indigo (*Amorpha fruticosa*). Presentations, tours, and demonstration plantings have been conducted at Mille Lacs Reservation, White Earth Reservation, Red Lake Reservation, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, and Fond du Lac Reservation.

### NRCS Tribal Coordinator Offices

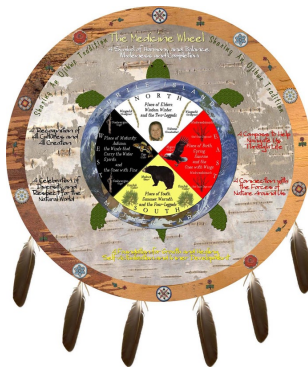
Center of Excellence  
Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College  
Cloquet, MN  
(218) 879-0863

NRCS Tribal Natural Resources  
Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians  
Red Lake, MN  
(218) 679-3959

NRCS White Earth Natural Resources Department  
White Earth Band of Ojibwe  
Ponsford, MN  
(218) 573-3842

*“The PMC has been an icebreaker for initiating assistance with the Tribes. The importance of re-establishing plants in a native environment is at the heart of the Tribal people, and it impacts the health of the community, physically and mentally.”*

– David Wise  
NRCS Tribal Liaison  
Cloquet, Minnesota



*“Culturally significant demonstration plantings give the NRCS an excellent opportunity to make new contacts with non-traditional clientele. Tribal cooperators share their stories and good working relations with their friends and neighbors.”*

– Dustin Jasken  
NRCS Tribal Liaison  
Ponsford, Minnesota



Plants for a demonstration planting at Mille Lacs Reservation



Outdoor classroom at Fond du Lac Reservation



White sage trial at White Earth Reservation